

March 17, 2000

Federal Caucus Comment Record
c/o BPA-PL
707 W. Main Street, Suite 500
Spokane, WA 99201

Dear Sir or Madam:



Washington
Public
Utility
Districts
Association

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The Washington Public Utility Districts Association represents 28 nonprofit, community-governed electric utilities that provide electricity and drinking water to nearly a third of the people in Washington. We appreciate the attempt by federal agencies to engage the region in a discussion of salmon recovery measures, because we believe a comprehensive recovery effort is needed—one that will require understanding and commitment among everyone in the region. No simple approach is going to do the job.

We believe that a successful salmon recovery plan must adhere to the following principles:

- The recovery plan must be broad, covering all the factors in salmon decline. We appreciate the comprehensive approach of the All-H paper.
- The plan must establish achievable goals and must hold responsible entities accountable for meeting those goals. The call for performance measures and standards in the All-H paper is a good step in this direction.
- The governance of the plan must be simpler than the status quo. We urge the Federal Caucus participants to consider establishing a single governance body.
- A governance body must have sufficient authority to effectively implement the recovery plan.

With these principles in place, we believe the region can recover its wild salmon runs while preserving the hydroelectric system that offer many benefits to the region. Hydropower is a reliable and efficient energy resource that does not require the transportation or storage of fuel and waste. Hydropower does not contribute to acid rain or global warming.

It is particularly important that we preserve the hydro resource because the region is facing a power supply deficit. A recent study by the Power Planning Council found that the region faces nearly a one in four chance of being unable to fully meet demand for power during coming winters. Breaching of the four lower Snake River dams would mean the loss of 1,200 aMw of capacity, exacerbating the power supply problem and leading to the likely replacement of much of this capacity with fossil fuel resources.

The length of time that would be required to breach the dams is another important factor that must be considered. If the dams were to be breached, many time-consuming steps would have to be taken: a decision by Congress, appropriation of funds, completion of engineering plans, removal of structures, mitigation of the environmental damage caused by removal, etc. Much time would pass, and many dollars spent, before salmon could begin to benefit— and the outcome of dam breaching is uncertain. Time is precious in the effort to recover salmon, and we believe it would be better to devote resources to recovery strategies that can be implemented sooner, with more certain results.

We encourage the Federal Caucus to continue providing the leadership that the region needs so that we can pull together around one comprehensive, goal-oriented plan with measurable results.

Sincerely,


Steve Johnson
Executive Director